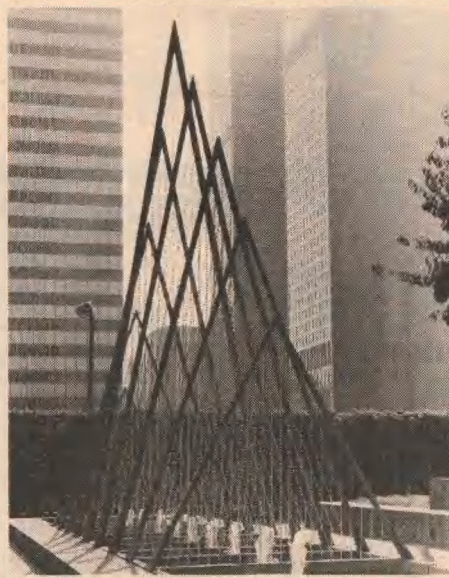


## SCULPTURE IN THE CITY

Los Angeles / **Betty Brown**

Entering the Security Pacific National Bank building downtown, you walk under the warm orange arms of an insectlike work by Alexander Calder. The monumental piece forms a proper preface for much of curator Tressa Ruslander Miller's *Urban Sculpture*, as the spirit of Calder's numerous innovations permeates much of the exhibit.

Calder sparked a revolution when he created his first mobile. It was as if he wrote the enabling legislation that allowed sculpture to move from the static, contained and all-too-often-academic to—well, to work as carefully concerned with motion as Sarah Tamor's *Birds for Angelou*. Tamor has created a fragile, daddy longlegs of a structure that draws up a billowing square of silk and drops it in a fluttering path toward the ground, then pulls it skyward again. *Birds* evokes liberating thoughts of kites and clouds, parachutes and sails, as it engages the working populace that moves by the three-story shaft in which it is located. John Canavier, as well, works with motion. But rather than relying on mechanization, he employs the wafts of wind that cross one of the Security Pacific patios, letting them lift and stir the shimmering wire tendrils that form a graceful circle around the gunmetal gray base of his piece.



Robert Bassler, *Increments of Three*, 1983, mixed media, 18'x 6'x 25', at the Security Pacific National Bank Plaza, Los Angeles.

The motion of water was dealt with by Calder, too, as in his fountain sculpture for Saarinen's General Motors center. Both George Geyer and Robert Bassler chose to work with the Security Pacific fountains. Geyer has sunk three pine brackets in the center of a pond and balanced two thin vertical strips of glass in each. The glass sways in precarious arcs before the tall waterfall that tumbles behind it. Bassler's

*Increments of Three* is composed of eight steel triangles crossed by woven lengths of rope. They are placed in a tile-floored pool whose short jets of water spurt up between them. The piece has a neat internal rhythm and establishes a larger counterpoint with the silvered cityscape surrounding it.

Of course Calder also dealt with color, both in his whimsical circus pieces and later works, and Jay Willis continues this trend in his sculpture. Both of Willis's pieces at Security Pacific employ bright enameled pigment. The *Column* series almost looks like seven brilliant crayons standing on end.

And Calder dealt with play. Both Eugene Sturman and Michael Davis have constructed fantasy forms that have the look of gigantic creations by imaginative little boys, and Connie Zehr has used porous pieces of volcanic rock to establish fanciful "personae" who perch among cast-concrete chairs.

Calder's work was never noted for a meditative stillness, which is the effect Lita Albuquerque has magnificently achieved with her large triangle of copper sheets pressed onto an interior wall of the Security Pacific structure. The metal reflects on the polished surface of the floor below and, in Albuquerque's words, "Beneath the black polished granite are a series of

subterranean islands . . . each one floating on a polished copper plate . . ."

Calder was never known for the use of technical illusionism, either, but that is the thrust of the works by Michael Hayden, Robin Vaccarino and DeWain Valentine. Hayden's *Phase Shift* employs holographic diffraction grating on acrylic triangles that are iridescent in the sunlight from the tall skyscraper windows, reflecting rainbow colors onto the blackness below. Lights from the ceiling above become series of red, yellow, green and blue circles in the honeycombed reflection. Vaccarino bends steel frames and paints abstract-expressionist impasto over some of the surfaces, allowing the colored strokes to be reflected and repeated in the shining metal and polished floor. Valentine clusters strips of purple glass to form a layered parallelogram of light refractions.

The Security Pacific exhibit encompasses a broad range of sculptural concerns—from the traditional issues of balance (evident in Woods Davy's works) and casting (seen in Michael Todd's piece) to very contemporary postmodern issues (displayed in Sauren Crow's elegant black sand environment). It is a tribute both to Calder and the multiple ramifications of his innovations and also to the corporate sponsor and its expert curator. □